

**BRONZE STAR with VALOR RECOMMENDATION FOR
SPECIALIST MICHAEL SHARPLES
MOTOR TRANSPORT OPERATOR**

On 20 March 2005, Convoy 678N was traveling north on Alternate Supply Route Bismark enroute to Logistic Supply Area Anaconda when forty to fifty anti-coalition forces with the intent to cause American casualties ambushed the convoy. The ambush consisted of the following elements: heavy small arms fire; an improvised explosive device placed in the road median; two road obstacles meant to funnel and fix the convoy; accurate rocket propelled grenade fire with direct hits to vehicles; and a ground assault of 10-15 insurgents upon a line of convoy escort platforms. The insurgents captured were carrying handcuffs suggesting they were intending to capture American Troops. Specialist Sharples was the driver of the second-to-last M915 in the convoy when the convoy came to a sudden halt. Specialist Sharples heard a barrage of gunfire and the cries of a wounded soldier over the radio. Rocket propelled grenades were falling on forward trucks and more soldiers were being wounded. Specialist Sharples was listening to his radio and heard that the convoy was moving out of the kill zone but noticed that the trucks in front of him were not moving. Under fire, he dismounted to see what the problem was and saw that some of the civilian drivers in the convoy had dismounted and were hiding in the ditch next to the road for cover from the incoming gunfire. He ran up the side of the convoy attempting to get the drivers back into their trucks, but scared and unable to understand English, most of them did not yield to his instructions. He ran to the rear of the convoy to tell Specialist Birkel, the passenger of the maintenance bobtail in the rear of the convoy, what was going on and that he needed help getting the civilian driver back into their trucks. Specialist Birkel told Specialist Sharples that Sergeant Ricketts, a soldier who had been wounded earlier, had not been extracted from the kill zone. Specialist Birkel radioed to the rest of the convoy that he was going to get Sergeant Ricketts and dismounted. Specialist Sharples and Specialist Birkel, covered by Specialist Schrad and the gunner of the convoy escort platform behind them, ran three to four hundred meters while under fire to the front of the convoy and found Sergeant Ricketts lying next to a civilian truck. Ron Hart, the retired Army Department of Defense driver of that truck, had already assisted another soldier in moving Sergeant Ricketts and was providing suppressive fire with another soldier's M249 squad automatic weapon. Specialist Sharples and Specialist Birkel placed Sergeant Ricketts in Mr. Hart's truck and told Mr. Hart to get in his truck and get out of the kill zone. As Specialist Sharples and Specialist Birkel were returning to their vehicles, they coerced the civilian drivers out of the ditches they were hiding in, often times having to force the civilian drivers into their trucks. The drivers remounted and started following Mr. Hart out of the kill zone when Specialist Birkel noticed that another truck with its driver in it was not moving. Specialist Sharples assisted in getting the tractors switched out before remounting his vehicle. He then drove out of the kill zone ensuring that all operational vehicles were following him. Specialist Sharples' complete disregard for his own safety saved the life of a wounded soldier and allowed the convoy to escape of the kill zone. His actions reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

